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Albany academy for girls

PRIZE

COMPOSITIONS,

WRITTEN BY MEMBERS OF THE

ALBANY FEMALE ACADEMY,

AND

READ AT ITS TWENTY-EIGHTH ANNIVERSARY,

JULY 16, 1841.

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ALBANY :

PUBLISHED BY ERASTUS H. PEASE, 82 STATE ST.

1841.
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PS 647
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PRIZE ESSAYS.

SILENCE.

BY MISS MARGARET ROBINSON,

OF NEW-YORK.

Mysterious power, thy magic reign o'er countless worlds pre-
sides,

Far as the planets wheel their course, or roll the distant tides;
Earth, Ocean, Heaven, alike thy sphere, no limit to thy sway;
The restless sea, and warring wind, thy secret power obey.

Before the morning stars were formed, that deck yon azure sky,
Or mountains reared, in lofty pride, their towering summits
high;

Before the chambers of the east with gorgeous folds were hung,
Or echoing back to angel harps its vaulted arches rung,

Silence was there—on all around its holy influence fell,
And Nature owned throughout her works, the magic of the
spell;

The angels, robed with radiant light, in quiet beauty shone;
And silence was the unmeasured praise they gave to God
alone.

The earth a boding stillness keeps, when the tempest gathers
round—

A pulseless silence, far more dread than e'en the tempest's
sound;

When turns the wing of the forest bird, affrighted to her nest,
And the heart of the mother to the babe that's cradled on her
breast.

When tempests howl along the seas, and angry billows roar,
 And the vexed waters lash in rage, the deep resounding shore ;
 And high above the deaf'ning blast, the thunder peal is given,
 Like Sinai's trumpet long and loud, that shook the gates of
 Heaven;

Then, everlasting Silence reigns, deep, deep beneath those
 waves;

The noise of waters never comes within their coral caves ;

The mermaids deck their flowing locks, with gems like morn-
 ing dew,

And flowers unfold their petals, bright, with all the rainbow's
 hue.

When worn with toil and wasting care, the mind in frenzy burns,
 To Silence, as a refuge safe, in hope and trust it turns ;
 And on the soul its influence falls, like dew on Hermon's mount,
 More grateful than the cooling rill from Horeb's gushing fount.

In silence speaks the feeling deep, that words may not impart ;
 And Silence is the untutored voice that tells a broken heart :
 It tells of sorrow far too deep to reach the speaking eye—
 A settled gloom that asks for rest—but not beneath the sky.

When rapture fills the trusting heart, as rain drops fill the rose,
 'Till bending 'neath the treasured wealth, its petalled cup
 o'erflows ;

Vain, vain are words to speak the bliss ; but breast to breast
 allied,

Pours forth, in tears of silent joy, the soul's o'erburthened tide.

The spirit communes with its God, when the passions all are
 still,

And restless thoughts are slumbering, like mist upon the hill ;
 The free soul pours its incense forth, of gratitude and praise,
 For loved ones clust'ring round the board, for health and
 length of days.

* * * * *

And when the prophet of the Lord by Horeb's mountain stood,
 Faint with the perils of the way, by vengeful foes pursued,

List'ning to hear the voice of God, his onward steps to guide,
Where danger lurked on every hand, and death on every side ;

Then, lo ! a mighty wind passed by, and rent the mountain
top—

And from its firm foundation deep it broke the solid rock ;
But in the wind no voice was heard to greet his list'ning ear,
And terror crept along his veins, and in his bosom, fear.

Then came the earthquake, but not yet his Maker's voice was
heard ;

And fire passed by, but not in fire was yet the welcome word ;
But when the tumult all was o'er, and naught but silence near,
The " still small voice," in accents mild, fell on his list'ning
ear :

And Silence reigned in Heaven above—no sound nor voice
was heard ;

No murm'ring note of rapturous joy the holy quiet stirred :
From angel harp, or seraph lute, breathed not the lightest tone,
While white-robed bands of angel forms stood circling round
the throne.

With heads bowed down in silence low, and pinions closely
prest,

All bright and blissful in repose, and glorious in their rest :
'Twas the peace of God in stillness felt, pure, holy and in-
tense—

'Twas the joy of spirits purified, unmixed with aught of sense.

* * * * *

And when this earth shall pass away, and the heavens are no
more—

When darkness broods where sun and moon had shed their
light before—

When nature's voice is hushed in death—then, in her pride
again,

Triumphant o'er the chaos wide, shall deathless Silence reign !

Porte Composition of the Normal French Class,

BY MISS CATHARINE C. ABEEL,

OF ALBION, ORLEANS CO.

PARALLELE ENTRE CORNEILLE ET RACINE.

Tous ceux qui ont du goût et de la délicatesse ne peuvent manquer d'être intéressés et d'avoir leurs idées du beau et du sublime singulièrement augmentées en lisant Corneille et Racine, deux des plus célèbres écrivains dramatiques qui aient jamais vécu, et dont les œuvres ont si justement excité une admiration universelle. Ces deux grands hommes, qui écriverent à des époques différentes, ont eu autrefois et ont maintenant leurs amis, leurs partisans, et leurs critiques. Cependant tout le monde s'accorde à dire que, quoique leurs beautés soient d'un genre tout différent, chacun est incomparable dans ses œuvres. Nos émotions en les lisant different beaucoup. Les tragédies de Corneille font éprouver non seulement du plaisir, mais aussi une élévation de sentiments qui arrive au plus haut degré. On s'étonne que les caractères soient si grands, et les sentiments si élevés. On s'imagine entendre parler, non des hommes, mais des demi-deux. Au contraire, en lisant celles de Racine, nous nous livrons insensiblement à nos émotions ; et à mesure que nous lisons nous sommes excités et émus, nous essayons à voir tous les évènements qu'il décrit se passer devant nos yeux, tant ses tableaux sont vraisemblables.

De là, nous commençons naturellement à examiner la cause de cette différence dans nos émotions ; enfin, nous arrivons à la conclusion que l'un de ces grands hommes a peint la nature et les passions comme elles sont, et que l'autre, sui-

vant son génie noble et élevé, nous a menés au dessus des faiblesses de ce monde, et a représenté les hommes parfaits, doués des sentiments plus nobles que les nôtres, et exempts de ces passions violentes qui sont le partage des humains. C'est pour cette raison que les ouvrages de Corneille nous intéressent moins que ceux de Racine, où la nature est décrite dans toute la simplicité, où le cœur est démasqué, et où toutes les nuances délicates de la sensibilité et de la passion sont peintes avec une adresse si exquise que le lecteur tressaille insensiblement. En lisant les caractères qu'il a décrits avec tant de force, spécialement ceux d'Hermione et de Phèdre où les labyrinthes compliqués du cœur sont exposés à la vue, et où les passions son peintes avec des couleurs aussi vives que vrais, nous sommes forcés d'avouer que Racine, Racine seul a compris les mouvemens sans nombre du cœur humain. C'est pour cette cause aussi que les émotions que nous éprouvons en lisant les ouvrages de Corneille tiennent plus au sublime qu'au beau; on admire les caractères qu'il décrit, et les sentiments qu'il peint nous transportent, mais ils ne nous émeuvent pas comme ceux de Racine. Par exemple, le noble dévouement des Horaces, la vertu stoïque de vieux père de ces héros, et l'amour du pays qui excite un frère à immoler sa sœur, produisent en nous des émotions qui tiennent au terrible plus qu'au sublime. Nous ne pouvons concevoir cette vertu farouche, qui sacrifie à son pays les liens les plus doux et les plus sacrés qu'il y ait sur la terre. En lisant ces caractères nous sommes forcés de nous écrier: Racine a peint, il est vrai, de grandes passions, mais Corneille a peint de grands caractères.

Bien des gens ont attribué cette différence entre le style de ces deux autres aux circonstances dans lesquelles ils furent placés. Corneille écrivait ses tragedies sous le règne orageux du ministre de Richelieu, et Racine sous le règne plus heureuse de Louis Quatorze. Ceci peut sans doute avoir contribué à produire une différence entre leur style. D'ailleurs, Corneille avait naturellement un esprit très fort, un imagination élevée, et la force et la grandeur dominant dans ses tragédies. Il était comme seul dans son art; il n'avait point de

censeurs, car son génie le porta au dessus de tous ses contemporains et conséquemment au dessus de leurs critiques.

Racine était né avec une imagination vive, et avec toutes ces qualités si nécessaires pour former un écrivain tragique ; il écrivait ses pièces à l'époque la plus polie du monde, et il avait pour contemporains des intelligences du premier ordre. *Andromaque* est son premier chef-d'œuvre, et dans celui-là il égale les plus beaux ouvrages de *Corneille*. Il écrivit ensuite *Iphigénie*, *Phèdre* et *Athalie* ; et quelle beauté, quelle harmonie de versification, quelle pureté de diction, on trouve partout dans ces pièces ! On ne peut rien ajouter ni rien changer sans nuire à cette beauté de style qui est à lui seul. Racine est le premier qui ait bien peint l'amour sur le théâtre Français, et il le montre dans toute sa fureur dans *Hermione* et dans *Phèdre*. Je pense que cette passion, dans les tragédies de *Corneille*, est trop froide pour être naturelle.

Il me semble qu'il y a plus de force dans le style de *Corneille*, et plus d'élégance dans celui de Racine ; qu'il y a plus de vigueur dans les expressions de celui-là, et que celles de Racine sont plus ornées.

Le style de Racine est fait pour produire la pitié et la terreur, celui de *Corneille* pour produire la sublimité ; conséquemment l'effet des pièces de celui-ci est moins touchant et moins attendrissant que l'effet des pièces de celui-là. Racine fait verser des larmes, *Corneille* excite des transports ; Racine intéresse toujours le lecteur, mais *Corneille* devient quelquefois trop froid pour y réussir. Cependant il y a des choses plus belles dans *Corneille* que dans Racine, et il y a souvent plus d'élévation dans les sentimens.

Corneille a bien peint les mœurs et les vertus des Romains dans les *Horaces*, et la peinture des juifs dans l'*Athalie* de Racine ne peut être surpassée ; cette tragédie me plaît beaucoup, quoiqu'il n'y ait ni amour ni intrigue ; le langage en est si beau !

Soit que mon goût penche plus vers l'élégance que vers la sublimité, soit que j'aime mieux être émue et attendrie qu'étonnée et maîtrisée, les tragédies de Racine me plaisent plus que celles de *Corneille*.

2d Prize Composition of the First Department.

BY MISS JENNETTE M. HALL,

OF OWEGO, TIOGA CO.

THE MYSTERIES OF BEING.

Man is wonderful ! visible ! and invisible ! mortal ! and immortal ! Dust of the earth ! breath of heaven ! The master work of Deity. *Upon* him is the impress of the Eternal, and *about* him are wrapped transcendent mysteries. Who can comprehend or explore his commingled nature ? He is endowed with faculties with which he can reveal the hidden things of earth, soar amid the splendors of the starry heaven, number its brilliant throng, and measure their greatness as he passes on through the infinite universe.—But when he returns to himself, he finds that all his powers are unable to fathom the depth of his own being. As he looks upon his physical frame, which is so curiously, exquisitely formed, and contemplates its complex and delicate arrangements, its intricate combinations, and harmonious movements, he is filled with admiration and astonishment ; but hid from him are the causes of its muscular action. He cannot trace its chemical changes, or discover the mysterious fluid or principle by which the nerves transmit intelligence. Unknown to him is the origin of that genial heat which warms and animates his frame, and concealed from him are the secret sources of life. But this is only the beginning of mystery. Connected with his organized body is something which he feels is self. It thinks, reasons, and wills ; he calls it soul ; but what is it ? He can gain no knowledge of it from his senses, by its operations he may become familiar with some of its powers and susceptibilities. But when he asks what it is, there is no answer save its silent aspirations.

To remove the clouds of obscurity which surround it, has engaged the noblest intellects, and called forth their strongest energies; but after having exhausted all their powers, they have been obliged to acknowledge their inability to accomplish their purpose.

Its nature is not only veiled in mystery, but many of its operations. It gains its ideas by the assistance of the senses, but by what means the senses convey intelligence to the mind, to man is unknown. It is effected by agents so subtle that even his consciousness cannot detect them.

Neither can he descend through the deep and mystic course which leads to the fount from which issue thoughts with all their new and varied beauty. It is far too deep to be revealed to mortal vision.

And beyond his reach is that wondrous reservoir which receives the mighty tide of thought. He feels that it exists, he has given it a name, but who knows, or who can describe it? Within it are treasured all the impressions and fond imaginings of years that are past. Still he is not conscious of their presence, or even existence, until they are brought from their secret retreat. Sometimes they come forth unbidden, sometimes in obedience to the mandates of the will, at others all the energies of the soul might be wasted in futile efforts to call them from their mysterious depths.

Scenes and emotions which have long since passed away, by conception may be recalled with a vividness that almost equals reality. Is it not wonderful, that when surrounded by darkness, or when the eye has ceased to perform its office, man may yet enjoy the beauties of nature, and be cheered by the countenances of those most dear?

But still more wonderful is his power of imagination. With it he can wander through fields of light and beauty—roam through the pearly caves of the deep blue sea, form worlds, people them with fair and holy beings, and live in the new and varied scenes of his own creation.

The mysteries of Reason, that noble faculty which distinguishes man from the lower orders of creation, are inscrutable. Although by it he is prepared to investigate truth—to discov-

er the relations which objects and facts sustain to each other—to explore the dark future, and to read in the boundless fields of nature the character of God—yet, he is unable to trace its own operations. And notwithstanding it is a part of himself, and its movements are his own, still he cannot describe them; they are unknown to him.

And no less mysterious is the Will. It is the imperial monarch of man; and guides each thought, each word and act. Its slightest influences, as well as its most imperious dictates, are felt and obeyed. In it lies man's power. It is this which gives him dignity and nobleness: it is this which shall decide his eternal destiny. But how it performs its acts or communicates its mandates, is beyond his investigation.

What can be more wonderful than the Passions; the mystic movers of man? Like the elements, some of them burst forth in raging tempests; others come like the soft evening breeze. But there are times when they are hushed, and sleep like an infant on its fond mother's breast; and when lulled to repose like spirits of air, they then are unseen. Vast are the changes they effect. One moment he may be like an angel of mercy; the next, like a demon of darkness. When his heart is warmed with affection, and he seems all kindness and gentleness, a word, or even a look, may arouse convulsive anger; and, trembling with rage, he is ready for cruelties the most atrocious. To-day he may be noble and courageous; to-morrow, base and cowardly: at one time he may be indifferent to everything; at another, awake to all beauty and harmony. What an amazing combination! though differing so widely, they join to make one perfect whole.

Man is a wonderful being! He has a moral nature, which enables him to distinguish between right and wrong. He is surrounded by temptations to sin, but this is his unerring guide to truth. As virtue to him is attainable, this points him to objects worthy of his noble endowments. It restrains his grosser passions, illumines the pathway to another world, and raises the heart, with grateful emotions, to the Source of all good.

In mysterious whispers the soul speaks its own imperisha-

bility, and no one who will listen to the gentle but convincing voice within its secret depths, can doubt his immortality.

But man, this noble and unrivaled specimen of the workmanship of God, must die! Yes! "He cometh forth like a flower and is cut down: he fleeth like a shadow and continueth not;" but when the heavens are no more he shall awake from his sleep, and having the impress of immortality, he shall remain as long as eternity its endless round pursues, or He who knows no beginning shall exist. To live is strange! but to die and yet live is amazing!

The influence that mind exerts over mind is wonderful. It lights the eye with the deep glow of feeling, and paints upon the countenance the delicate and almost imperceptible shades of thought, and transmits the passion-spark from soul to soul, awakening deep thoughts in their inmost recesses.

But still more wonderful does man appear when we contemplate his mighty mysterious spirit, clothed in its own eternity, giving the seal of immortality to the myriads of its thoughts.

In view of his power and greatness, he is wonderful. He can ride proud and free upon the tempest-lashed ocean, play with the forked lightning, and on the wings of thought explore creation's wide domain. He is the ruler of every being on the footstool of Deity, the uniting link between heaven and earth. And when by sin he lost his primeval holiness, even the Mighty One, he who weighs the mountains in a balance and the hills in a scale, left his eternal throne, and clothed with mortality, yielded himself to the monster death, that he might become his redeemer.

A spirit created in the twinkling of an eye! he is capable of infinite improvement, and as he floats down upon the bosom of eternity, his faculties will continue to expand, his feelings to glow with more intensity, his moral powers approach nearer perfection, and his devotions increase in purity and holiness.

Man appears wonderful when we consider the relations he sustains to his God. Created in the image of his Maker, reflecting his glorious attributes, gifted with faculties capable of enjoying his presence, and of becoming his heir, he remains a living monument of the omnipotence of the eternal.

A contemplation of man, his noble aspirations, and the sublimity of life, seems to renovate and ennoble the mind, to exalt and almost entrance the thinker.

Yes! man is wonderful! Endowed with faculties with which he can investigate the laws and explain the phenomena of the world around him, and still is unable to penetrate the veil of mystery in which he himself is enveloped. He is a mighty and glorious emanation from God, standing between two eternities with infinity around him, in majesty sublime.

3d Prize Composition of the First Department.

BY MISS CAROLINE A. WHITE,

OF ALBANY, N. Y.

THE BENEVOLENCE OF GOD NOT FULLY DEMONSTRATED WITHOUT THE AID OF REVELATION.

Both the visible and the invisible world conclusively prove the existence of a designing and ruling power. In all we see, or hear—above, beneath, or around us—there breathes the spirit of God. The universe is replete with evidences of his existence. An eye that will see, can trace the hand of an intelligent Creator in all greeting the vision, from the flowrets' beautiful petals to the brilliant stars of heaven. An ear that will hear, can learn in every tone, from the whisper of zephyr to the rolling thunder, that there exists a Deity. The orbs which move in rich harmony through ethereal space, the exquisite constitution of animate and inanimate creation, the wondrous mechanism of our physical natures, and the glorious powers of our deathless minds, emanated from naught save Divinity.

The existence of Deity once fully demonstrated, the mind naturally invests him with attributes. Revelation clothes him with omnipotence, omniscience, wisdom, eternity and benevolence. Natural theology likewise recognizes in him an Eternal Being of infinite power, knowledge and wisdom. *But does it recognize the fullness of his love?* Had revelation never irradiated earth with its celestial beams, would man conclude from the natural and moral government of the world that infinite benevolence was possessed by God?

It is difficult for us to divest ourselves of our belief in the goodness of Deity—a belief derived from the precious revelation of his being and attributes given us by himself; difficult, because the truths contained in that revelation have been instilled into our minds from earliest infancy. But had it never been given to us, and were naught known of the moral character of the Creator save that which nature teaches, would we conclude that our God is a God of love, as infinite in benevolence as he is in wisdom and power?

Let one possessed of a mighty intellect, whose powers have been unfolded to their utmost extent, seek from the light of nature only the fullness of divine benevolence. Let him gaze on the varied and rich domain of nature. The earth is radiant with beauty, and as the manifestations of infinite power and wisdom every where greet his vision, his mind is elevated and expanded, and he feels that He who made this world is infinite in his perfections. But while gazing on its beauties, while its fascinations are thrilling his soul with purest joy, the howl of the death-seeking hurricane is heard, roaring in wild fury over land and sea, seeking for objects on which to spend its wrath. How unsparing, how merciless that storm breath! It lays low the noble heritage of the rich man and the humble dwelling of the tenant. The dumb beast of the field it spares not, and even proud man bows in the dust in fear of its wild anger. Turn to the ocean and view its desolations. An hour ago and that now dismantled ship struggling so wildly and fiercely with the raging tempests, swept the main with pride and majesty, proud queen of the crested wave. She bore a rich and happy burden. Oh! many a joyous heart was there throbbing in wild delight, in fond anticipation of their hopes' fruition; for in a few short days a native land should greet them and dear friends bid them welcome. An hour! how changed their hopes, their feelings! The anguish of despair is depicted on every brow. Their deep, unutterable agony none may describe. Death beneath the ocean seems the inevitable doom. Where now is the hand that can quell the angry billows, the voice that can say to the winds and waves, "peace, be still?" But hark! heard

ye that fearful crash? That vessel, laden with foreign treasure, with its rich burden of animated and glowing forms, with wealth of affection and power of intellect that none can estimate, lies buried deep in ocean's caverns. And not *once* alone in the lapse of centuries does a proud vessel with its lofty and noble treasures sink to rise no more. But oft are our ears pained and our hearts thrilled with such mournful intelligence.

From earliest ages there has been that in nature which has caused the frame to tremble and the spirit to bow in fear. Those two proud and noble cities whose marble collonades and gilded domes were wont to sparkle in the morning sun—where are they now? History records a day when they were rich in splendor and magnificence, when joy and gladness had spread their wings over their towering battlements. While yet the dark cloud of their destiny brooded ominous from above them, sounds of mirth and revelry resounded—the gay repartee dwelt on the lip—the eye sparkled and the heart throbbed with pleasure. The power of intellect grasped the truth of science, the mind of a Pliny there was engaged in mighty speculations. Another morn dawned on them. Where are those architectural boasts, where those pillared halls, those breathing forms, those mighty intellects? A cloud of dense, sulphuric vapor is above, a mass of burning lava rolls beneath. Herculaneum and Pompeii, in the zenith of pride and glory, have passed away. There was no shield to interpose between them and the scorching blast of mad Vesuvius; there was no voice to bid the burning stream rush in some other channel; but all, the rich, the poor, the taught and untaught, the *innocent* and the guilty, are enveloped in one smoking shroud.

Again the foundations of the earth are convulsed, the mighty granite rock is riven, a chasm yawns in rage and closes not till devastation and ruin have been wrought and scarce a trace of existence left behind. And though that mighty mind should view no more of nature's ravages, would he not have learned to fear and distrust her? Does he not find her very calm, deceitful?—death brooding not more in her wintry blasts than in her summer zephyrs?

Let him view the irrational portion of animate creation. Though from their very nature, sorrow cannot exert a powerful influence over them, yet is it not sad to think that they must waste away and die? That the dancing butterfly with its ethereal pinions, the insect tribes with their brilliant hues, our forest songsters, with their rich plumage must all die and return to dust. But there are nobler objects yet. View the being of mind and soul, the pride of creation. *Man* has mighty sorrows to contend with. Whether considered as a being of exquisite physical nature, of mighty intellectual powers or one with immortal soul; yet is he ever found affliction's chosen one. Gaze on our daily records. Peruse the morning and evening chronicles. Is there not an appalling, thrilling list of woe delineated there? It is awful to think of the desolation of spirit, the anguish of soul brought daily to our ears. Oh! they have truly said "the note of sorrow is the key note of humanity. They that strike it, strike a chord in every human breast." There is no situation, no rank or condition in life exempt from ills. The marble palaces of kings oft echo sighs of stern grief. In the lowly walks of life, how much of wretchedness is found. There is suffering amidst the virtuous poor which seraphs might mourn over. There are tales in the suburbs of every town which, if robed in the splendid drapery of poetic fiction, would melt the hardest heart and bring the tear of sympathy from every eye.

In respect to man's physical constitution, the most skeptical must acknowledge that there are *betrayed* in it noble manifestations of divine skill and energy. The moulding and connection of the osseous system alone, would convince one that the impress of deity was there. But when to this there is joined a knowledge of the delicate combinations of muscle and tendon, the proper functions of the innumerable minute capillaries of the vascular and the slender filaments of the nervous systems; an acquaintance with the strangely constituted heart; with the arterial vessels conducting life from its great centre to the most distant and minute portion of the frame; with the veins returning the purple current to be so mysteriously renovated; with the delicate convolutions and

exquisite organization of the brain ; with the several wondrous mediums of communication with the external world ; and with the constitution and fit use of all the organs so perfectly arranged and concealed beneath a delicate drapery which renders the human frame beautiful to look upon, none can or dare *deny* that it is the handiwork of the Almighty. Yet this wondrous constitution must be deranged and broken down. This beautiful temple is of perishable nature and must decay and fall low unto the dust. None can live three score and ten, without the sharp pain darting through the seat of life—languor and disease creeping over the frame ; weakening its energies and wasting its glories. Oft in the early dawn of life, the seeds of disease are implanted in the system, and though long years may be appointed for existence, they will be those of distress and pain. Oft must man in the pride and glory of his years, while fame and wealth are wreathing their bright laurels around him, desert them all for the chamber of sickness, the bed of death. Disease now with rude hand, in a moment will prostrate the noble form, and again it will creep over it with consumption's stealthy pace, now lulling fear and awakening hope, then appalling the heart with its deep ravages. There are times when pestilence walks abroad, not alone as a midnight marauder, but even in the bright sunshine ; whole provinces are made desolate, and the air far and near is tainted with its pestiferous influence. Every hour disease greets us, the air we breathe wafts onward the seed of death, every thing imbibed, though it be for nourishment, contributes to decay—decay of that frame so beautifully and skilfully formed by the hand of Deity.

Contemplate man's intellectual nature. There are noble *minds* on earth ; minds to whom is given the mysterious and godlike gift of genius. And have they not received what is best fitted to make happy an intellectual being ? Does not happiness in brightest radiance bend over those favored ones ? Ah no ! misfortune is the lot of genius. Its sweetest strains are oft penned in utter desolation of spirit, and its brightest flashes extinguished by tears of anguish. Sorrow has ever lurked beneath that brilliant spell, and we cannot but acknow-

ledge it "a bright but fatal gift." There are minds on earth so delicately woven, so sweetly sensitive, as to seem ethereal in their nature. It is delightful to commune with them, for we seem as in the company of pure spirits. But sad is their lot in this world of ours. Few will sympathize with and appreciate their natures. Fit objects for angels' tears, they live in solitude of hope, in sadness and in woe. There are *hearts* crowded with rich affection, breathing rare sweetness around. But oft do they wither and die under contumely and scorn. Life is made up of confidence. It is the sole reliance of an earthly being. But oft, when the whole faith has been reposed in one alone, when the heart has poured forth its rich deep affection upon one loved object, the faith has been betrayed and the heart left blighted and desolate.

His Creator has bestowed on man a mind whose mighty energies, whose powerful capacities, no mortal can estimate, one thirsting for knowledge, desiring full development of faculty, never satiated with its attainments; a mind whose wonders and mysteries Deity alone may reveal. Now when we contemplate one fit to soar beyond the clouds, one to whom the abstruse philosophers of earth are plain as sunlight, consumed by the wild flame of insanity; the eye, wont to sparkle with intelligence, dilating to its utmost extent in the strange glare of madness, the artifices of idiocy entirely usurping the sway of reason, are not our souls thrilled with horror?

It is not once, nor thrice alone in memory of man that the maniac's wild and startling scream has rent the air, but so frequent is the wreck of mind, that every country, every province, has its asylum for the poor lunatic.

Let every man contemplate, in the darkness of nature, a single situation in his own life; let him think of *his own* death scene. Knowing that he is a moral agent, with an immortal soul, I would ask him if, in the dark creed of nature, there is aught can reconcile benevolence with death, when the bonds that have held him in sweet communion with those he loves are to be rent asunder, when the cold dew is gathering on his brow, his eyes becoming glazed and fixed, his limbs refusing former offices, his pulse throbbing yet slower, and a strange

feeling at his heart telling him life is ebbing—where then shall he look for hope? He has the full consciousness of an immortal soul, but where shall that soul spend its immortality?

The mind may conceive of a heaven in which it may be perfectly and eternally happy. But is there proof of this sufficient for a *dying* man? sufficient to satisfy the soul on its flight from earth? With a revelation, reasoning from analogy, we may find that in “the course of nature” which will satisfy the mind concerning a future state. But without it, where shall we find certain evidences that our hereafter will be suited to intellectual beings? While glowing with life and animation, probable evidences may suffice; but when *death* broods on our pillow, the mind is not contented with mere speculation. We must, while yet we *know* it *cannot* be so, hope that we shall sink into nothingness, or own we *go*, we know not where. If benevolence had watched over us in life, yet if it had not revealed the certainty of a heaven of bliss, the mind, far from resting on probabilities, would be harassed and agitated beyond all conception, and in maniac madness would rush—where? where? Ask ye of nature where? She is silent—she knows not.—But light is brightest in darkness. In the midst of the mind’s confusion and agony, let revelation’s glorious aid be given to man; let earth be encircled with its halo of heavenly light; vanished, vanished forever are all doubts, all misgivings, as to the benevolence of Deity.

Revelation distinctly, solemnly, gloriously asserts, “God is Love.” Love blooming in brightest hour and fading not in that of desolation—love watching over us in life, standing by us in death, pointing to heaven’s golden portals, unclosing them that we may enter and dwell with pure spirit forever. Love that has “Length without end, breadth without limit,” higher than heaven, deeper than hell. Love that formed primal man in purity and holiness—love that placed him where all conduced to happiness—love that when man had fallen from the elevated position originally assigned him, could send his only son as Mediator—send him from the loftiest seat in

heaven to the lowest on earth, from the companionship of seraphims to that of degraded, erring mortals; love that when man had censured, reviled, and persecuted the holy Jesus, even unto death, and the shameful death of the cross, far from being extinguished, was ready in that hour, when but a single evidence of penitence was given, to send from heaven a holy influence upon man, that would prepare him to spend with God a blessed eternity. Let man learn the *fullness* of His love from revelation—then where was darkness, will be light; where sorrow, joy; when, was utter uncertainty as to a hereafter, will be the blessed assurance of an immortality in the divine presence. Oh it is a holy, blessed light, the light of revelation.

Though there is that in nature which would confound the wisest philosophers, though there is that incomprehensibility in death which man can never fathom; yet they disturb us not; they weary not our souls, for we know and feel that our God is infinite in goodness, though his ways are oft inscrutable. How many a sinner has been impeded in his mad career by the agonizing knowledge that one in the same stages of crime has been swallowed up by the angry billows, without a moment of reflection. What though our destiny be dark, what though sorrow has ever saddened our hearts, it is ungrateful for us to murmur—this is but our short probation, but the traveller's resting place in view of his father's mansion.

Revelation whispers, too, that it is good to be afflicted. God has said "blessed are they that mourn." "Affliction is no child of earth," but she has been sent from heaven to purify our gross natures. How oft is genius led to bow at the shrine of the Deity, and its powers rendered still more exalted by the suffering which seems its necessary attendant. How oft does the rudeness of earth render the sensitive mind still more ethereal and fit it for heaven. How infinitely more do we prize our intellectual faculties and endeavor to exert them in that befitting their nobility, after the contemplation of their awful wreck. How does all sorrow soften the asperities of our nature, and all mortality lead us to a preparation for our own

departure. Oh ! affliction is ever sent in mercy ; far from being the enemy of our moral nature, she is its noblest, truest friend ; she is sent to purify our souls, to make them fit inhabitants for the heavenly kingdom.

God, as an Eternal Being breathing his power, presence and glory throughout the universe, inspires awe and reverence, but a God infinite in benevolence, awakens the soul's richest affections and draws it nearer to its primeval source. A benevolent man affords a theme worthy of noblest intellect ; but a benevolent God demands

——“ An angel's lyre,
Language of light and sentiment of fire.”

Prize Composition of the Second Department.

BY MISS SARAH M. MEIGS,

OF ALBANY, N. Y.

JOURNEYINGS OF THE WIND.

Spirit of the wind ! thou wondrous being of the upper world ! whose presence is every where felt, yet whom we may not see ! impart to me thy secrets, tell what thou art ?—whence thou camest ?—thy dwelling place ?—thine office ?—and where have been thy journeyings ? And the gentle zephyr answered, “ Mortal, it is not thine to know all things thou hast asked of me, but this I may reveal. I am the messenger of Heaven, to distribute among men both good and evil, blessing and curse. I roam through every clime, on wing swifter than the soaring eagle—now on the summit of a lofty mountain, and now in the depths of a low valley. My dwelling place is the vast globe, the north and south, the sea and land. My age is that of Time. When the first blissful pair were placed in Paradise, I was in being. When the angels, as messengers of love, came to visit the favored ones, I bore them upon my wings as in a chariot. I sometimes fanned the cheek of Eve, and murmured through the shady groves, vieing with the songs of the sweet warblers, and producing music pleasant to her ear. And although man fell from his pure innocence, yet I did not forsake him ; when he returned from his labor, I sought him out, and cooled his burning brow, and gently fanned him in his rest.

I have been sent by the Father of all good on innumerable errands of love.

When all around is still, I bear to the mariner sweet music from the far off coast. I waft to him the fragrance of the dis-

tant shore, and it recalls to him thoughts of his home, of the loved and absent.

When the noon-day sun has been pouring his scorching rays upon the earth, till herb and beast and man seem ready to droop and die, then I come with my invigorating breath, and impart to them new life and energy.

I visit the inhabitant of the sunny South. I spread my wings to refresh him. I gather the aroma from the orange groves, and gently waft it onward till the whole air is filled with fragrance.

I visit the bed-side of the dying. I soothe his sufferings ; cool his fever-heated brow, and bear to him the voices of sainted friends, who call him from this scene of sorrow and of care ; or the songs of the bright angels, in praise of their Redeemer ; and, as the sweet tones fall upon his ear, his countenance is irradiated with the heavenly joy ; he gently murmurs, I come—I come ; and his spirit flies to the realms of bliss. But I yet hover around his pillow—kiss his cold lips—gently stir his moistened locks, and whisper to the weeping group sweet consolation. They listen with deep attention, and imagine the spirit of the departed speaks to them. And when the dead is placed in his narrow house, when he is committed to the tomb, I linger o'er his resting-place, and amid the dark foliage of the cypress and the willow, I sadly chant his dirge.

I guide the proud ship through the mighty waters, gently propelling it onwards. I fill its white sails and direct it to the desired haven.

The Being whom I serve is not only a God of mercy and of love, but he is a just and an avenging God. Those who obey his precepts and trust in his love, live in the light of his smiles. Upon the disobedient and sinful, his vials of fierce wrath are poured out. It is given to me to dispense his bounties, but I too must be the minister of his vengeance.

I pass a busy city,—its inhabitants, unconscious of lurking danger, are pursuing their various occupations—when all unwarning I come upon them in my strength. I overthrow their proud habitations, and their works of art ; they seek for safety in flight, but wherever they direct their steps destruction fol-

lows ; by land there is no escape, and none by sea. They tremble and acknowledge I am God's messenger of wrath.

I look upon the gallant ship and her brave crew, and she is tossed upon the midnight wave. I tear her sails, lay low her strong mast, and make the sailors mad with fear. Some hold fierce revels to forget the presence of Death, which rides upon the black waves—others sit in mute despair, or in frenzy, invoke the assistance of insulted heaven.

In the dreary desert, the wearied traveller hastens to the cooling stream. I breathe upon him, and he smiles a kindly welcome. I redouble my power—I gather the dry sands of the desert and raise them like the waves of the ocean—I drive the deadly simoom upon him, he bends low, and hopes to escape—vain hope !—the scourge of the desert makes him his prey.

I am the instrument of his vengeance when He sendeth the pestilence abroad. I respect neither age nor station. The infirm and the beautiful alike wither at my presence. I enter the habitations of royalty—I poison the goblet, and mingle deadly odors with the costly incense. I visit the lowly hovel, and the peasant gasps and dies. They, who seek in the caves of the earth to elude my vigilance, are forced to bow low before me. In the court, and in the camp, all pass away. I cease not my work till I have accomplished the purpose of Him whose minister I am.

My whole existence is devoted to my Maker. I obey, and question not,—and oh ! that proud man might learn—

“ His holy counsel to fulfil,
To suffer all his righteous will,
And to the end endure.”

Prize Composition of the Third Department.

BY MISS RACHAEL RAMSAY,

OF ALBANY, N. Y.

THE FEELINGS OF THE ORPHAN.

No sound breaks the silence of the hour of death ; no murmuring word escapes the lips of her who soon must feel a mother's loss. But her countenance bespeaks that which words cannot express—it discloses the anguish of the heart though she would fain conceal it. The tender vine which had clasped its tendrils each day with renewed force around the mother tree, was now separated from it ; for death's withering hand touched the parent stem and it perished, leaving the vine to bear the rude storm alone. No friendly footstep is heard : no kindly hand leads her from the scene of woe ; no soothing voice administers consolation. In the ignorance of her youthful heart she watches with increased anxiety for that smile and embrace which she always enjoyed ; for hope is an impulse which the youthful heart ever cherishes. She is not aware that the loved form before her is but a mass of lifeless clay, the spirit of which God has claimed. She gazes upon it with mingled fear and hope. But ah ! she will never again hear from those lips their wonted instructions ; never again will she frolic in childish glee by the side of her indulgent parent and pour into her ear the overflowings of her innocent heart. She entreats for one consoling word to sooth her swelling heart and quell its rising fears. But in vain. As she approaches the bedside, dread forebodings seize her mind and she shrinks from the freezing touch of a mother's corpse. Her eyes are opened to the truth. She is now aware that she is alone and unprotected. A dark scene of misery is unfolded to her in

the future. She endeavors by childish amusements to dispel her sad feelings ; each little treasure she unfolds, but to no purpose, for they only remind her of her bereavement. Not even the soft tones of brotherly affection can afford her consolation. She thinks but of the past, of her mother's dying prayer, of her parting blessing, and her last fond look. To the grave she hastens and entreats into its bosom to be admitted, to lie down in peace beside the cold form of her mother. And in her grief she vows that neither voice nor smile, however sweet, shall tempt her to leave the spot where all that was dear to her lies buried. But she finds, though in the deepest misery, God is still mindful of his creatures, for the messenger of love is nigh, whose outstretched arm offers relief, and whose cheering voice draws her from her lonely seat. And while she relates each little woe with plaintive voice to her deliverer, her tears are mingled with those of the messenger of love. As she listens to his admonitions, a gleam of hope illumines her pale countenance, and she inwardly exclaims "God has indeed taken me up." And now bright prospects open before her : gratitude claims and possesses a prominent seat in her heart. Friends lend an influence to promote her happiness and will ever be loved and warmly cherished by her : yet with the remembrance of those, a lovely image seems to hover about her and she loves to dwell upon that form, though long unseen, for filial love is that which God has planted in each heart and commands us faithfully to preserve. Wherever she goes her mother seems to watch over her, and she delights in the thought, that, though unseen she is still present. And may not that which causes even the blind to rejoice, and deprives death of its cruel sting, prove of infinite value to the Orphan ? It may. The rugged path of misfortune is overlooked, and she thinks only of the bright prospect which religion has opened to her. Happy is she who, though a prey to sorrow, looks to religion for support !



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